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C O N F I D E N T I A L HARARE 000165

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SUBJECT: STATUS OF PLANNING FOR ANNAN VISIT TO ZIMBABWE

REF: A. A) 2005 HARARE 1663

[1](#)B. B) 2005 HARARE 928

Classified By: AMBASSADOR CHRISTOPHER W. DELL, REASON 1.4 (B) (D)

[1](#)1. (C) During a February 10 meeting, UNDP Resident Representative Agostinho Zacarias told the Ambassador that the UN Secretariat was still actively working on plans for a visit to Zimbabwe by SYG Annan. According to Zacarias, the issue had been raised during a one-on-one session between President Mugabe and visiting US SYG Jan Egelund during the latter's December 4-7 visit to Zimbabwe (ref A). In that session, Mugabe proposed "talks about talks" between the GOZ and the UN, joined by the UK and Norway as representatives of the international community. Subsequently, State House had run a series of emissaries past Zacarias, supposedly to flesh out the details for such talks, and Harare was pressing for Annan to come in March. Recently, Foreign Minister Mumbengegwi had traveled to New York to meet U/SYG Gambari to further preparations for the visit, but Zacarias claimed he did not yet have a readout on their discussion, although he believed New York would still insist that Gambari visit Harare first to prepare for an eventual Annan trip here.

[1](#)2. (C) Zacarias said the Zimbabweans felt isolated, under tremendous pressure and were desperate for relief. However, Zacarias claimed that he opposed holding unconditional discussions with the GOZ and seconded the Ambassador's observation that international re-engagement with and support to Zimbabwe had to be predicated on a willingness to engage in serious and substantive political and economic reform. Expounding further, Zacarias said that an Annan visit was a one-time, "last chance" event and he had recommended that Annan not come unless the agenda was clear and the prospects for success good. There was no point in having the SYG come if the GOZ's only goal was to persuade him to disavow the strong public criticisms made by Egelund and Anna Tibaijuka in her report on Operation "Restore Order" (ref B).

[1](#)3. (C) During a meeting with recently arrived British Ambassador Pocock, the Ambassador asked about the status of the "talks-on-talks" initiative. Pocock said the UK Mission in New York had told Gambari in no uncertain terms that London had no interest in the initiative if it was "unconditional," as this was tantamount to acceding to Harare's agenda from the outset. Pocock said London shared the view that re-engagement with Zimbabwe would only be

possible on the basis of a "concrete and sustained" policy of reforms, which he opined probably did not square with Mugabe's intentions.

14. (C) Comment. Although the Brits haven't exactly been forthcoming with us previously on their potential role in any "talks about talks," their basic approach would largely track with ours. The UN's views, however, may not square with ours as closely. Both Gambari and Zacarias are African diplomats of the "come let us reason together" school. They will be sorely tempted to pursue talks for their own sake in the hope, no doubt vain, that they can produce some kind of "breakthrough." For their part, the Zimbabweans are desperately throwing out a variety of signals in the hope that someone can be lured into a process that will buy them time and stave off economic collapse and political ruin just a little bit longer. We recommend that USUN approach Gambari and the Secretariat staff to repeat the message AF/S recently gave the Zimbabwean Ambassador to the U.S.: we're ready to engage and help, provided that Zimbabwe is prepared to bite the bullet on reforms. Absent that we would not support talks with the GOZ for their own sake. DELL
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